

Gypsy Moth

Frequently Asked Questions

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The following questions about gypsy moths & our traps are frequently asked by landowners or residents we have contacted about our gypsy moth detection surveys.

1. Is there only one kind of gypsy moth?

No. There is more than one kind of gypsy moth, determined by where they came from. The traps that we put out will attract all gypsy moths. Most of the gypsy moths caught in the United States are from the European (North American) strain, but occasionally an Asian Gypsy Moth is captured. The Asian Gypsy moth is a larger concern because the females are able to fly, so the population could spread much faster. In addition, they have a broader range of host plants that they will feed on than the European moth. Both types of Gypsy moths look the same.

2. Question: Where do gypsy moths come from?

European Gypsy moths are introduced to our state by people. Usually they come from states that are generally infested with the insect. These include the northeastern states as far south as Kentucky and Tennessee and as far west as Wisconsin. These introductions occur when some life stage of the moth (usually an egg mass or pupae) arrive attached to an outdoor household article such as lawn furniture or on a vehicle. People moving to the state and tourists are normally the source of these introductions. The Asian Gypsy moth is rarely found in the United States, but is usually moved here on large vessels carrying cargo across the ocean from Asia.

3. Question: What harm do gypsy moths do?

Gypsy moth caterpillars feed mostly on deciduous trees and shrubs. When an infestation progresses, serious defoliation may occur and repeated defoliation may kill the trees. Equally offensive are the thousands of caterpillars and their droppings in residential areas and around home sites. The Asian Gypsy moth feeds on a much broader range of host plants than the European Gypsy moth.

4. Question: Have there been infestations of gypsy moths in Idaho.

Yes. In 1988 and 1989 infestations of European Gypsy moths were detected and treated in Sandpoint and Coeur d'Alene and in 1998 a small population was treated near Post Falls. These eradication efforts have been very successful and no reoccurrence has taken place.

5. Question: I saw a gypsy moth at my porch light last week. What should I do?

There are dozens of common species of moths in this area. Identification of a specific species, particularly one as uncommon as a gypsy moth, requires careful examination of wing patterns, antenna and other features by a trained professional. Sometimes the use of a microscope or other visual aid is required. If you feel certain that you have seen a gypsy moth you should capture one (more if possible) and bring them to the Idaho Department of Lands office for positive identification.

6. Question: Why does this survey need to be done every year?

Actually, all areas of the state are not trapped every year. Cities and other areas that represent a high risk of introduction are trapped each year. Other smaller towns and areas of lower risk are trapped every second or third year. As indicated in question number 2 above, locations where lots of people are moving into the state from generally infested areas and tourist attractions represent higher risks. Suitable habitat is also taken into consideration.

7. Question: Are gypsy moths killing all the Douglas Fir (Red Fir) trees in this area?

No. Gypsy moths are not particularly fond of conifers. If there is nothing else for the caterpillars to eat they will feed on Douglas Fir and some pine species. However, it is questionable if they could maintain reproducing populations on a steady diet of conifers.

8. Question: How many traps are put out around the state each year?

It depends on the year, since all areas are not trapped every year, but it averages between 5500 and 6500 traps placed per year.

9. Question: Are there any harmful chemicals in the traps that could hurt children or pets?

No. The baits in the traps only attract gypsy moths, and they are not harmful to people or pets.

GYPSY MOTH DETECTION TRAP

TRAPPING PROGRAM

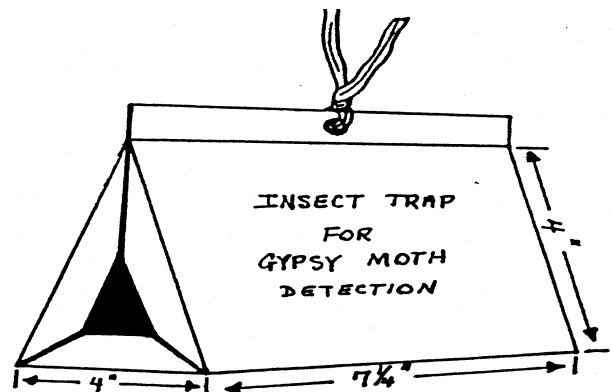
Each summer, The Idaho Department of Lands and cooperating agencies conduct a survey and detection program for gypsy moths throughout Idaho. This is accomplished by placing traps containing an attractant in trees or on fences or buildings at strategic locations. The trap contains a lure which attracts male gypsy moths to it. Once a male moth flies into the trap, it becomes stuck on a sticky material which covers the inner surface of the trap. There are no harmful chemicals in the trap. This trapping process is a valuable tool to tell us where gypsy moths occur.

THE TRAP

The gypsy moth trap is orange, green, or tan. It is made of thin, wax-coated cardboard and measures 7 1/2 inches in length by 4 inches in height and width. The trap is generally hung in trees at a height of 5-6 feet.

HOW CITIZENS CAN HELP

Gypsy moth traps will be present in trees in your Idaho community from approximately June to October. It is very important that all traps remain "in place" throughout this period so that the Department of Lands can obtain accurate information about the gypsy moth in your community.



CITIZENS CAN BE A BIG HELP TO US AND TO THEIR COMMUNITY BY: A) ENCOURAGING PEOPLE NOT TO REMOVE THE TRAPS, AND B) REPORTING TO THE DEPARTMENT IF TRAPS HAVE BEEN VANDALIZED OR TAKEN, OR IF YOU WOULD PREFER NOT TO HAVE A TRAP PLACED ON YOUR PROPERTY. CONTACT THE DEPARTMENT OF LANDS AT (208) 666-8623 OR (208)769-1525, OR 3780 INDUSTRIAL AVE SOUTH COEUR D'ALENE, IDAHO 83815.